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TAGS: OITP KMDR KPAO JA

SUBJECT: TOKYO MEDIA REACTION - ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE HILL'S VISIT TO NORTH KOREA

LEAD STORIES: Monday morning's Tokyo Shimbun front-paged Sunday morning's NHK-TV interview with PM Abe, during which the premier stated his intention to seek constitutional revision three years from now.

¶1. "Will DPRK Take Concrete Action?" An editorial in the top-circulation, moderate Yomiuri commented (6/23): "...Assistant Secretary of State Hill, the US representative to the six-party talks, visited Pyongyang for talks with Foreign Minister Pak and other North Korean officials.... Last week, the DPRK announced that it will accept the visit of IAEA inspectors to the Yongbyon nuclear complex.... It is only natural that the US should call on Pyongyang to quickly implement the initial steps toward denuclearization. The question is the extent to which the North Koreans will act.... Diplomacy among the members of the six-party talks will pick up if the DPRK implements the initial steps. It remains to be seen, however, whether the parties other than North Korea can take concerted action. Different approaches on their part would be to the advantage of Pyongyang. It is important for Japan to work closely with the US on the issue...."

¶2. "Keeping Close Watch on DPRK Actions" The liberal Asahi editorialized (6/23): "...Assistant Secretary of State Hill's visit to Pyongyang was a meaningful development.... Should North Korea move toward denuclearization, the other members of the six-party talks, including the US and Japan, will also have to take action. Even though North Korea reaffirmed its commitment to implement the February six-party agreement, there is little room for optimism that

everything will proceed smoothly. Work needs to begin on the provision of energy to North Korea and on diplomatic normalization. Although there are concerns in Japan that the abduction issue could be left behind, we are of the opinion that progress on the nuclear front will create an environment for resolving the abduction issue."

SCHIEFFER